

The Courage to Change

by LtCol John Chandler, USMC(Ret)

In order for our Marines to be supported during the global war on terrorism, logistics systems and processes must change.

The dynamics of any organization is apparent in the day-to-day operations that sustain that organization. Dynamics can be observed by the ferocity with which they attack a project, a program, or a city. Dynamics is the combined energy of people, processes, and technology. This concept is easily understood by Marines whose combat organizations move forward because of people, processes (methods), and technology (weapons systems), and without an equal and complementary amount of each ingredient dynamics suffers. The lack of any of these three crucial elements will impact the organization's ability to complete its mission. It takes a commander to develop and maintain dynamics in peacetime and in com-

bat, but it takes *courage*—by the commander—to change the elements of dynamics in order to optimize the organization, especially in combat. Is maintaining dynamics the “burden of command”?

In the late 1990s the Deputy Commandant, Installations and Logistics (DC I&L) realized that logistics support had not been keeping pace with the modernization being institutionalized by expeditionary maneuver warfare (EMW). EMW propels Marines farther and faster than the “logistics chain” would eventually be able to support. In the late 1990s it appeared that the Marine Corps had the luxury of time and space for developing new systems that would enable the logistics chain to become more flexible, responsive, and re-

liable, and support the dynamics of EMW. However, time waits for no man, and the enemies of our Nation did not stand still. The global war on terrorism (GWOT) now propels forces from all major Marine installations into harm's way. Each deployment and engagement continues to test 30-year-old systems and proves that our logistics chain is, under the current strain of GWOT, stretched as far as it will go. Evidence of that can be found in the experiences reported and recorded by all commanders who returned from Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM (OEF/OIF). The dynamics of EMW has exceeded the dynamics of our logistics chain.

It takes courage to change, and DC I&L, LtGen Richard L. Kelly,

took the courage to stand forward and illustrate where our logistics chain requires improvement. Gone are the days of defending a support architecture that worked well (not great) in garrison but did not go beyond the gates of major installations very well. The first courageous step toward improving the logistics chain was saying that it was inadequate to current demands and will not support the future of EMW. The next step was to increase the tempo of change within I&L and move from an academic to an operational view of the problem. An even more courageous step was when DC I&L empaneled a group of distinguished retired general officers, all of whom had been commanders supported by the aging logistics chain, to conduct an "executive assessment" of current logistics transformation efforts. This distinguished panel traveled to every major installation in the Marine Corps to interview commanders in the field who are supported by the logistics chain and have firsthand observations of the Marine Corps' efforts in logistics transformation. This very open, very honest appraisal is a leap forward by LtGen Kelly to sort out where our efforts in transformation are succeeding and where they are lagging.

The panel found and reported that DC I&L must synchronize the transformation of the logistics chain with the efforts that have transformed the warfighters into the environment of EMW. Our logistics dynamics (people, processes, and technology) has been way behind the dynamics of EMW. Do we have the right people in the right places doing the right thing with the correct technology in order to support EMW? And more importantly, how do we get our people to the right places, and what is the correct technology? The panel validated that DC I&L must work in concert with the DC, Combat Development to explore these questions and find answers. Further, the panel illustrated that it is vital that users of the logistics chain—Marine Corps-wide—become aware of the efforts to improve the dynamics that provide support to the warfighter en-

gaged in EMW. The apparent bottom line from the panel was that logistics transformation needs to parallel and support the development of EMW.

Moving forward from the executive assessment, DC I&L has embarked on a leadership plan that will better articulate what logistics modernization will do for commanders at all levels of war. One of the strongest findings of the executive assessment was that too few people understood what was being done to improve the logistics chain, and even fewer could appreciate the significance of the changes. DC I&L realized that commanders, who rely solely on the logistics chain for support, were not included in developing and evaluating the impact of recommended changes to the logistics chain. During the early months of 2004, a team supported by media professionals traveled Marine Corps-wide seeking to learn what concerns commanders have, at the tactical and operational levels of war, for logistics

modernization. They are using this information and experience to develop a communications strategy that will allow commanders to better understand how logistics modernization supports EMW. Commanders have been concerned that they would lose organizational structure and preferred the status quo since it supported them, albeit poorly, but—knowing what the logistics chain did for them today—was better for them than knowing what it could be doing for them during a modernization effort.

So what is being done to help a commander? Where are the dynamics? An overwhelming majority of commanders report that information is as much a weapon as the weapons systems it supports. They need accurate information in a timely manner. Here is a summary of actions to date to satiate a commander's need for logistics modernization.

(1) The Commander, Marine Corps Systems Command (MarCorSysCom)



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has been fully funded to develop and implement the Global Combat Support System-Marine Corps (GCSS-MC) and field the initial enabling components to the Operating Forces during fiscal year 2006 (FY06). This "system" will be a portfolio of information management tools that will enable commanders to understand their logistics situation at the same speed with which they understand their enemy's situation.

(2) MarCorSysCom has also stepped up development and fielding of the command and control (C²) module to GCSS-MC. The common logistics C² system, which began testing just as forces were deploying for OIF, is now undergoing strenuous redevelopment based on lessons learned reported from OEF/OIF. Testing of these renovations began in the Operating Forces during May and June.

(3) The expeditionary warfare logistics test bed is evaluating improvements in automating the management of distributing supplies and services on the EMW battlefield—to the last tactical mile. The contractor (Concurrent Technology Corporation) has already engaged forces at II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF) and will soon be engaging the battlefield distribution challenges from a "tri-MEF" perspective. Contracts to support this effort are fully funded and supervised by Headquarters Marine Corps (Logistics Plans and Vision).

(4) The utilization and evaluation of radio frequency information devices in order to establish a logistics common operating picture for the Ma-

rine air-ground task force (MAGTF) commander is underway at both I and II MEFs. This implementation is in support of OIF II and has begun to support MAGTF-8 involved in Haiti operations as well. Now commanders can see the logistics chain flow support forward and evaluate where chokepoints may be in order to improve support to the deployed MAGTFs.

(5) The Marine Corps logistics chain analysis teams (MCLCATs) are embarking on a transformation that will organize and educate the teams to better analyze and support the logistics chain at all levels of war vice the business perspectives of the past (retail and wholesale). Officers in charge of the MCLCAT offices are meeting in Quantico to chart this transformation and have been directed by DC I&L to be up-gunned and ready by FY05. Their task will be to undertake both education and analysis of the logistics chain and support commanders at all levels of war with timely feedback on the logistics chain.

(6) Two of the three MEFs (II and III MEFs) have implemented a "structure for change management" that allows the MEF to grow and vet enabling solutions that support logistics modernization inside their MAGTFs. The structure enables not only thought but action by product working groups (PWGs) tasked by the MEF Logistics Operational Advisory Group. The PWGs are assisted and supervised by the Logistics Modernization Oversight Committee and the LCATs who openly share lessons learned and concepts among the two the MEFs. I MEF

has not been able to participate due to obvious operational commitments but is routinely informed of any proposed improvements and is implementing those of its own. Leading change and sharing information remains the focus of this structure.

What is critical to note is that none of these efforts are stand-alone in nature; they are integrated in the overall context of logistics modernization, and the information technology efforts are all tied to GCSS-MC.

Having courage is important but doing something with it is vital to change. The Marine Corps knows that its future is fully grounded in seabasing and the forward thinking visions articulated in the Naval Services transformation—*Sea Power 21* and *Marine Corps Strategy 21*. We cannot get to network-centric warfare, as envisioned by these guiding principles, without the portfolio of logistics modernization initiatives currently underway and moving forward by the DC I&L. Supporting EMW and moving forward toward seabasing vice supporting the status quo of today's inadequate logistics chain is the focus of effort for logistics modernization. It will take this kind of courage to see the change from today and into tomorrow. We are moving forward and into new technology, new organizational alignments, and new ways of supporting the warfighter, and we need to do it together as one Marine Corps.

US  MC

>LtCol Chandler retired in July 2000. He currently serves as the HQMC field representative for logistics modernization with II MEF, Camp Lejeune.

Quote To Ponder

Logistics

"The commander who fails to provide his army with necessary food and other supplies is making arrangements for his own defeat, even with no enemy present."

**—The Emperor Maurice,
The Strategikon, c. 600 AD**